Bradley Exhibit Opens This Fall At the National Infantry Museum

by Diane L. Urbina

The National Infantry Museum (NIM) at Ft. Benning, Ga., is developing a new Bradley Fighting Vehicle (BFV) exhibit (outdoor and indoor) scheduled to open in November. The museum is in Building 396, Baltzell Avenue, on Ft. Benning's main post. It is one of the largest military museums in the country, housing a collection of more than 25,000 items in 30,000 square feet of exhibit space.

Visitors to the museum will have a first-hand opportunity to see a Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle (IFV) up-close, in an outdoor exhibit, featuring the M2A1 and an engineering prototype of the M2A3. The Bradley was developed to accommodate "block" improvements, with the M2A1 incorporating the first of these, an improved TOW antitank missile system and a better chemical protection system. The M2A3 features numerous improvements in lethality and survivability.

The indoor BFV exhibit, "Lethal Beyond All Expectations," will be the single largest exhibit in the museum. This exhibit marks the first time a major weapon system and the story of its development will be featured in a U.S. military museum. In addition to equipment and displays, the exhibit will provide a comprehensive overview of how the system was developed from 1968 to the present, with supporting documentation. It will explain to visitors the Bradley mission, doctrine, training, and organization. More importantly, the display will include accounts by former and current program participants, including combat developers, materiel developers, and industry representatives, of how the Bradley was developed, tested, fielded, and upgraded over the last 20 years.

The Bradley, as one of the "Big Five" post-Vietnam weapon systems, has had some interesting and unique twists and turns in its development. Following the Vietnam War, the U.S. Army was undergoing radical reorganization and significant changes in doctrine, training and tactics. During these critical changes, and despite a massive Soviet build-up of its armored force, the Army struggled to justify the greatly increased cost of replacing its infantry armored personnel carrier with a much more expensive true infantry fighting vehicle. It was against this setting that the Bradley was designed, developed, and produced. Visitors will gain rare insight regarding the Bradley project's cost, schedule, and performance trade-offs.

The exhibit will feature newspaper articles, photographs, videos and displays grouped by events in the program life-cycle. Some of the equipment displayed will include the M242 25mm Bushmaster cannon, M257 smoke grenade launcher, M240C coaxial 7.62mm machine gun, M321 5.56mm firing port weapon, training ammunition, infantry squad equipment, TOW missile, M47 Dragon, and SINCGARS radio system.

The Museum continues to seek Bradley documentation (photos, videotape, significant program documents, newspaper articles) for donation to the exhibit. We are particularly interested in information regarding development of the MICV by Pacific Car and Foundry; the three Task Force Reports (Casey, Crizer, and Larkin); the cannon "shoot-off" between Hughes Helicopter Company and Ford Aeroneutronic Corporation; live fire testing and test reports; and first-hand accounts of the Bradley's performance during Desert Storm. If you have documentation for donation (which will not be returned), or stories you would like to share regarding development of the Bradley, please forward to:

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